The Theosophical FORUM

DECEMBER, 1904

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THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM

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* * *

The Yellow Emperor was once journeying round the north of the Red Sea, and he climbed to the summit of the Kuenlün mountains. On his return to the southward, he lost his magic pearl. He besought his wits to find it, but in vain. He besought his eloquence to find it, but that was also in vain. At last, he besought Nothing, and Nothing recovered it. "How extraordinary!" exclaimed the Yellow Emperor, "that Nothing should be able to recover it! Dost thou understand me, young man?"

Wu Wei.

THE NOBLE TRUTH CONCERNING SORROW.

There are hours sometimes in late springtime, when, after rain, the sky clears and one can see for immense distances over the luminous and newly adorned world. All things have a transparent beauty, and tell of another life more divine, more blest than ours.

In the life of our passionate wills and longing, too, there are such springtime hours, when all things are lit up with an unearthly light, and we can see far and deep, to the inner realities so long hid among the mists. Let me take such an hour to record something of the deep conviction that I hold, deeper and surer than life itself, that all this wonderful world, with its beauty and its terror, its longings and its deprivations, its suffering and death, is deep founded on law and love. The world is full of sorrow, yet I am convinced that sorrow comes not from the world, but from the heart of man; that we are the creators of sorrow, which, without us, would have no being at all.

This seems to me the pedigree of sorrow; with a persistence which one day we shall purify and turn to our divine life, we seek certain things that seem our dearest good. But the things we seek would often offend the best part of ourselves, or would offend and hurt and touch with deprivation our other selves. We are therefore seeking something that is wrong for us, and would do wrong for them, and the good law of love lays upon us the burden of sorrow, until the lesson is learned.

We are hardly willing to admit, we strayed children of divinity, how strongly our affections are sat on material things. Not on rocks and trees and mountains, rivers and the unresting sea, or other like things properly called material; but on things far less beautiful than these, on the desires and longings of our own bodies. We will hardly admit, even to ourselves, how large a part of all our unrated longings refers directly to the surfaces of our bodies. Strayed children of divinity that we are, we should really have quite other hopes and aims; we should be concerned with the real things of our real life. But we do not see or recognize this. We are sincere dupes. Our longings present themselves as genuine natural wants, and we are deceived and allured by them to our unending sorrow. Yet deep within the heart there is the voice admonishing

us that we of divine ancestry should look elsewhere for our well-being, and if we heeded that quiet voice at first, we should escape from many pains.

There is something blinding in passionate desire, something which, as we yield to it, grows to a slow frenzy, and surely hides deeper and deeper the things of our nobler life. It is the smoke that enwraps the flame, confusing, deadening and fouling the light, so that, instead of clear radiance, there is a lurid glow, throwing gigantic shadows about us, which we take for malignant powers of the outer world, but which are shadows cast from within ourselves. Then, as there is much power in us, heritage of our life, which is divine even when submerged, we begin to create a little world of misery about us, which gradually shuts out from us the great real world of quietness and joy. Passionate desire for strong indulgence through the senses is a kind of poison. At first it deludes and fills us with phantasm. And even when we conquer, we are destined to long periods of pallid convalescence, before we shall once more taste real joy, the glad delight of the immortals.

Taken in large draughts, this passionate longing for indulgence makes great and conspicuous suffering, deep and far-reaching pain. But merely sipped, as most of the children of men take it, it carries only the numbness and half-blindness of materialism; of the millions whom we see all around us everywhere, leading dumb, slow lives full of want and deprivation. At first sight it would appear that there are purely material causes for the vast material misery so abundant among the most advanced races. Progress and poverty are linked together, yet not at all by economic causes. It is just the blind holding to material desires, material life, material resources and refuges, on the part of the numb and half-articulate millions, which makes all this misery. It is like a theatre panic where there is no fire; the surging together, the crowding of people in fear of death, creates a real danger, a real disaster, where no danger was. So our deprived and scanted masses are a panic driven mob, pushing half-blindly, half-unconsciously, yet very persistently, towards their material goal, and so crowding against each other, that they build the whole fabric of material pain and want.

The hideousness of the poor quarter in a great city is the visible expression of the forces of dull desire that bring it about. It

is created by tens of thousands of deluded hearts, full of dull material desires, very tenaciously held, though rarely breaking out into hot passion; and, for this very slowness, bringing a sorrow which is equally numb and slow. Yet the desire for material indulgence is just the same here, as in the most passional tragedy, though less conspicuous and dramatic. And the illusion of materialism wrought by this desire is not less complete, though it lacks the wildness and lurid light of more fiercely passionate natures. The multitudes are blinded by dull desires; blinded to the laws of love and divinity that are everywhere around them. They are so certain of the good of material life, that they clutch at it with convinced, tenacious fingers, drawn together into an even denser crowd, and bringing the slow constriction which expresses itself in poverty and want.

Great responsibility for this blindness dwells with those, who by their very profession and calling, should be teaching the way of life and declaring the law of the divine world. If the teachers were less heartily set on just such a worldly life as is the ideal of their congregations, they would be better able to show the path out of the labyrinth; out for the most part, instead of leading the crowd to the open doorways, they are first in the panic, as eager and ardent after the goods of material life as the least of those whom they profess to teach. The truth is that they become blinded by all this worldliness. Having eyes, they see not. They gradually obscure the divine faculty, the inner spiritual eye which keeps watch over immortal things, and, with growing blindness, they increasingly fail to see their unfitness to lead and guide; they become blind leaders of the blind, and the small old path is utterly forgotten. All this, in good faith, in sincere conviction that they are right. For it is part of the evil of desire, that it blinds us even to our blindness.

This is the first secret of sorrow. It is the fruit of desire for bodily indulgence, a desire purely psychical, and therefore blinding in the psychic world. And it is absolutely true, that the monitor is perpetually present within us, warning us of the real nature of desire, and of great danger. Yet so complete is our delusion, that we go deeper and deeper along the way of pain.

The second cause of sorrow is uncharity. This is a graver evil than the first, and does keener and sharper and deeper harm. Yet

this evil also springs from a delusion, no less gross than the desire for material and bodily indulgence. There dwells in us a certain divine sympathy, a willingness to let our hearts go out to each other, a willingness to open them to the divine life which is everywhere around us, calling us out of ourselves, as the sun calls the flowers forth from the buds. Side by side with this high and excellent power, there dwells another, less amiable, less worthy. It prompts us to assert our separate selves, as against the self in others, as against the great all wrapping divine life. Here also, however, the element of sincere delusion is strong, almost universal. Few, very few deliberately say: "I will injure my neighbor, to gratify myself." Still fewer say, or would dare to say: "I will shut out the great divine light, to nourish the self-importance of my own narrow and mean heart." But these things they do, none the less surely because unconsciously. It appears to them, to us, indeed, for we are all sinners in this regard, that we are in each case only seeking our own legitimate good, against envious or hostile people around us; or in the face of hard, inhospitable fate, which torments and threatens us. So we hug ourselves and harden our hearts. Thus we create the second cause of sorrow, one far keener, more piercing, more blinding than the first.

We are really born to largeness and generosity of feeling, for these are a part of divine nature, of which we are heirs. We even applaud with genuine, sincere approval the large and generous quality in others. Yet watch the immediate workings of our hearts, far from large and generous, for the most part. Everyone of us is, to speak, tarred with this brush of ungenerous thought and ungenerous speech. I have been watching the movement of my own thought and the speech of my mind for the last few days, in this very manner, with illumining results. Certain things, entirely through faults of mine, became entangled and confused, bringing much superficial irritation, and some deeper suffering with them, as my merited fruit, sown and grown solely by myself. In the disentangling of it all, I got some help, as much as I would allow, from one good friend, in the way of keen counsel, giving things their true value, though I at first refused to admit this value. Well, even now that I see the matter clearly, in the quiet after-light of a fully gained experience, I find my mind doing what? Genuinely grateful for

good counsel and sincere help? Anything but that. On the contrary still keeping up a dull, persistent nagging, addressed to my friend, accusing that friend of all ungenerous and unamiable qualities; which do, indeed, exist between us, but not on my friend's side.

Suppose the large wrongs of envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness to be dwarfed and stunted, covered with smoke and grime and in other ways rendered mean and small, they would fairly represent the furniture of my mind, for days at a time. A perpetual diminishing of the good qualities of others, a readiness to find fault, to indulge in the mean inner evil speaking, which is often the silent running accompaniment to outward politeness; a perpetual tendency to make mean little comparisons in my own favor and to the other's detriment, a most generous description to myself of great virtues of heart and mind, with a wonderment that the world at large is not more struck by the magnificence thereof. But a stubbornly rooted determination to hold my own, the fortress of my insignificant personality, against my neighbors and against the gods, which is a bad enough thing to account for half the sorrow of the world, and indeed does account for it.

One last self-rendered compliment. I do not believe that in this habit of mental evil speaking and evil judging I am quite exceptional, though I do believe that, with a highly active mind, with more than the ordinary psychic energy, I may do more active harm thereby, than most of my neighbors. But I am firmly convinced that here also it is exactly the same as with the great tragedies of passion, which are rare and execptional outbursts of a very common quality. This inner comparison, self-complimentary, deprecating others, is a thing spread far and wide among the brethren and sisters, who have only to look a little closely to see it in themselves, as clearly as each one of us can already, with *yogi* insight, perceive it in our neighbors. In the vast mass, it is dull and numb, generally taking the form of envy directed against the exceptional and gifted nature, or the class which, through long sacrifices and tried courage, has risen to a higher level in the great world of life. But present it is, as a perpetual whispering and humming, in the wide expanses of our minds, and the degree to which all life, day in and day out, is embittered by this running commentary, will only be realized when

we give it up, cease from inner evil-speaking, and learn to give others, without exception, that large and generous measure which, also without exception, we have from the beginning been dealing out to ourselves. And this should be kept in mind: it is not the tree of evil-speaking and evil-judging which is our chief danger and cause of sorrow, it is the root of the tree that must be cut. That root is egotism, self-centeredness, self-seeking, the setting of ourselves always first, as against others, as against the great circumambient divine life. This is the seed of sorrow, the root of all evil. We really do not matter in the portentous way we think we do; and in any case the good law, minister of boundless divine love, is there to take care of us. But even if we do portentously matter, we are only making it hard and ever harder for ourselves by our self-centered hardness and self-seeking. For if we do matter, it is because we can be of service to others, of use to the divine law of life and love. And these ends we do by no means serve by hugging ourselves together, and brooding over what are really our self-inflicted wounds.

If there be the noble truth concerning sorrow, there is not less the law of sorrow's ceasing. Here is a path, easy and gentle enough for the tired feet of our poor humanity. Do not try passionately to drive yourself into bitter asceticism, as a cure for bodily indulgence. But try instead to feel more and more the great powers of the divine and the immortal that are bending close over us. Let your weary heart be more pre-occupied with these high and lasting things, and with the great longing for them, and, guided by this golden clew, you will soon find the ways of life's labyrinth becoming a little more clear. Then try a little to soften your heart. Seek not your own. Try not to put yourself first even in thought; but seek rather what is due to your neighbor, and how your neighbor's need may be served. Think generously of others. The golden seed is in them all, and you may presently find it. But most of all, open your frightened and sore heart to the quiet beneficence which is the heart of immortal life, and in which we do in very deed rest, as in everlasting arms. . There will be a long, slow convalescence, but what else could come after so long an ill ss? But with every day there will also be a great and increasing delight, rising finally to the bliss of the immortals; no private benefit, but available for all the world.

"RESIST NOT EVIL."

"Resist not evil." By attacking evil or evil-doers we only increase their force. So with hypocrisy, hatred, pretension and all the other symptoms of a sick humanity: do not seek to repress them; build for health.

Here is the pitiable and abject spectacle of a man who has made a little throne for himself and sits aloft, gazing down upon his fellows. Yes, he says, they are good people, but he, he has a very special gift, an almost unique faculty of advising others, or of foreseeing the future, or what not: and he waves his gift before you.

Now comes the devil, urging—"knock him off his perch." And the devil argues: "He will mislead others; will deceive them. You must save them. Open their eyes to the fact that he is pretentious." Beware of that devil! Leave the manikin on his perch; do not dispute his possession of that extra filament connecting him with wisdom. Leave him alone. But when the next inquirer, trembling, approaches him, down on your knees to that inquirer, and tell him how divine a thing *he* is. Take his little, inquisitive, fearful heart in both your hands, and knead it till it is big, as big and as light as the sun in space.

Going on your knees will alarm him. No matter. It will catch his eye. "O most adorable and God-like Man, I salute you!" (After this you may arise). Then talk to him.

What! he thinks he cannot "hear," cannot "fore-see," does not know what to do! God in Heaven—what is he? Is he not a Man? Does he not know that he has lived and "heard" and "fore-seen" for innumerable millions of years; that he is greater than time and death and the angels? (If he dares to think at all, he will now think you quite mad. But again no matter. You will catch his ear.)

He doubts what you say? Why, what did he do but ten minutes ago? Was he not given by mistake a piece of gold for silver, and did he not chase the giver and restore that to which he *felt* he had no right? He did. And does he realize that this was wisdom, as great in essence as that of Solomon? And last night, did he not dream of a song he had never known? Why say he cannot "hear", when he can catch the songs of the Immortals? And what are these

fires (these rather timid fires) that burn in him? Lust and wrath! Good. For the fires in themselves are pure. He has merely lighted them in hell instead of in heaven. The same fires, blazing with love and power, soaring upward instead of earthward, will light up the darkness of the worlds. (Just see how his heart begins to glow).

Now say to him: come forth from thine unutterable insignificance. Gaze toward the Ancient of Days and fear not, but claim him as thine own, as thy Lover, as thy very Self. Say it ten thousand times if there be need: That thou art; that glory, that bliss unspeakable, that Something which knoweth nothing because it is all and everything. There is naught thou canst not do; there is naught thou canst not be. That Will—yesterday did it not magically restrain thy fear?—that same Will, linked with the universal, can build pathways for the stars. Surely it can raise thee, even thee, to majesty. O heaven-born, eternal man, how wonderful thou art!

And now that thou knowest it—what art thou to do? See yonder image on his self-made perch—the oracle. Scorn him not. Go to him; kiss his feet; whisper to him: "O dreamer of dreams, I know thee. Thou thinkest thyself different from others; more favored. Thou art not different,—but so infinitely greater than thou thinkest. And I worship thee because in spite of thyself thou art a Man. Come with me and be my brother and climb with me to where that Light shines of which we are the distant flashes. Or, better still, sit with me; we will open our hearts and the Light will find its own."

Evil vanishes when we evoke the best.

SAINTS OF IRELAND.

(Continued.)

Colum was not only a lover of the bards: he was himself a bard, and several of his poems, in ancient Gaelic, have come down to us. One records his first departure from Ireland, when he was exiled by the synod of Tailtin. Ben Edar, mentioned in it, is the Hill of Howth, close to which Colum had spent many months in study.

Delightful it is on Ben Edar to rest,
Before going over the white, white sea,
The dash of the wave as it launches its crest
On the wind-beaten shore is delight to me.
Delightful it is on Ben Edar to rest
When one has come over the white sea foam
His coracle cleaving her way to the west,
Through the sport of the waves as she beats for home.
How swiftly we travel! there is a grey eye
Looks back upon Erin, but it no more
Shall see while the stars shall endure in the sky,
Her women, her men, or her stainless shore.
From the plank of the oak where in sorrow I lie
I am straining my sight through the water and wind,
And large is the tear from the soft grey eye
Looking back on the land that it leaves behind.

Besides founding schools and churches in many parts of Ireland and planting out posts of Christianity and learning amongst the pagans of Scotland, first at Iona and then at many places on the mainland, Columba was an indefatigable literary worker. He wrote both in Latin and in Gaelic. In the latter time he composed the Irish poems, a part of which we have quoted. He used his knowledge of the former chiefly in the preparation of copies of the Latin Gospels. He is said to have transcribed three hundred copies of the Gospels. So great was his renown for beautiful penmanship that tradition has ascribed to him the writing of the famous Book of Kells. It is true that this wonderful manuscript comes from one of the monasteries founded by Columba, but it was probably written in the century after his death.

Adaman thus records the Saint's departure: "Colum Cille, son of Feidlimid, apostle of Scotland, head of the piety of the most part of Ireland and Scotland after Patrick, died in his own church in

Iona in Scotland after the thirty-fifth year of his pilgrimage, on Sunday night, the ninth of June. Seventy-seven years was his whole age when he resigned his spirit to heaven." This event belongs to the year 596 A. D.

Let us try to give a picture of the foundling of one of these schools and the life led by its inhabitants. At the heart of each one of these undertakings we find some man of fine character and strong personality, a born leader. Such a man had already gathered round him a group of disciples and followers, men as devoted as himself, yet recognizing his superior genius. Such a community of master and disciples gained the sympathy of a tribal chief or provincial king, who made a grant of land for local habitation and probably added a gift of cattle. The chiefs had for centuries been accustomed thus to grant land and cattle to their adherents and the old practice was continued with a new purpose. The land thus given to the teacher and his disciples always consisted of forest, pasture and arable land. It was generally chosen on the bank of a stream which supplied pure water and fish. This was the raw material from which the monastic settlement presently arose. The teacher and his pupils went with their axes to the woods to cut down trees to build their dwellings. Others herded the cattle, or yoked the oxen to plough up the new fields, and later quarried the stone to build their church. They themselves made all the furniture for their church and their houses. Besides carying on all the industrial activities thus suggested, the pupils studied indefatigably with their master, learning to read and write both Irish and Latin. Their most important work was the preparation of parchment from the skins of goats and sheep to be used in making the finely written manuscripts of the Gospels and other works. The schools took the place of printing houses, and as the missionary work spread, not only in Ireland itself, but in Britain and among many nations on the continent, there was a great and increasing demand for these Irish-made books. Numbers of them are still found in places as remote from Ireland as Milan and Schaffhausen.

These schools in time received many gifts in jewelry and gold from native chieftains and those who attended the services in their churches. The gold and jewelry were used to make beautiful church vessels, chalices, crosses and croziers, all decorated in the

native style, with embossed tracery marvellously interlaced, the same patterns that were used for the initials and head-pieces of their illuminated manuscripts.

The schools were also places of refuge and rest for weary travellers who received hospitality, kindliness and care, until they were ready to continue on their way. It was the custom at such a school that each student should build a hut for his own use, and as some of these early schools had as many as three thousand pupils, they were more like towns than monasteries.

The schools founded by Columba and his successors in many parts of Scotland follow the same model; and in the next century the same system was extended through the north of England. The pagan Saxons and Danes of Northumbria were the first to receive these Irish schools which brought them a knowledge of reading and writing as well as the rudiments of the Christian faith. The Monastery of Lindisfarne on an island off the coast of Northumberland was founded by the Irish monk Aedan in 634 A. D.; Finan and Colman, the two next heads of the Monastery were also Irishmen.

Thirty years after the founding of Lindisfarne the English historian Bede makes an entry which sheds some lights on the position of the Irish schools. Speaking of an epidemic of sickness which ravaged England in 664 A. D., he says: "This pestilence did no less harm in the island of Ireland. Many of the nobility and of the lower ranks of the English nation were there at that time: and some of them devoted themselves to the monastic life: others chose to apply themselves to study. The Scots (Irish) willingly received them all, and took care to supply them with food, as also to furnish them with books to read, and their teaching, all free."

It was about this time that Alfred, King of the Northumbrian Saxons, spent a period of exile in study in the Irish schools. He began of course by learning the Irish language. When he left Ireland some years later he recorded his impression of the land which had so hospitably received him, in a Gaelic poem which has come down to our days:

"I travelled its fruitful provinces round,
And in every one of the five I found,
Alike in church and in palace hall,
Abundant apparel and food for all.

Gold and silver I found and money,
Plenty of wheat and plenty of honey;
I found God's people rich in pity;
Found many a feast and many a city . . .
I found in each great church, moreover,
Whether on island or on shore,
Piety, learning, fond affection,
Holy welcome and kind protection . . .
I found in Munster unfettered of any
Kings and Queens and poets a many,
Poets well skilled in music and measure;
Prosperous doings, mirth and pleasure.
I found in Connacht the just redundance
Of riches, milk in lavish abundance;
Hospitality, vigor, fame,
In Cruacan's land of heroic name . .
I found in Ulster, from hill to glen,
Hardy warriors, resolute men.
Beauty that bloomed when youth was gone,
And strength transmitted from sire to son . . .
I found in Leinster the smooth and sleek,
From Dublin to Slewmargy's peak,
Flourishing pastures, valor, health,
Song-loving worthies, commerce, wealth . . .
I found in Meath's fair principality
Virtue, vigor, and hospitality;
Candor, joyfulness, bravery, purity—
Ireland's bulwark and security.
I found strict morals in age and youth,
I found historians recording truth."

As a general picture of Ireland, in the seventh century, this poem is of singular interest, none the less that it comes from an English King.

THE ONE RELIGION.

Several months were allowed to pass between the publication of the second and third parts of this series, owing to the impossibility of the author and the editor coming together to discuss certain points, concerning which the editor was in doubt. At a recent meeting between the two it was arranged, however, that the rest of the series should go in as they were originally prepared by the author for a course of lectures at Green Acre, Maine, in the summer of 1904. In this way, they hope, the author will have a better chance to do justice to his subject, in the eyes of the readers of the THEOSOPHICAL FORUM. The Editor, however, reserves the right to inform the readers that in this series the very justifiable enthusiasm of the author gives, perhaps, rather an undue preponderance to the Babi faith or Bahaism, as compared to other faiths. Not that the editor finds fault with the *Bab* or his followers, but simply that there are other founders and other faiths, which deserve just as much gratitude and veneration, on our part.

EDITOR.

III.

In the last paper the result at which we arrived was that, broadly speaking, the common element of religions are ethical codes and the inculcation of the practice of love to God and to man; that obedience to the former leads to the latter, so that the rules of conduct seem to have been promulgated in order to develop the capacity to love in the character; and that, therefore, the practical portion of all religion may be resolved into the practice of love. We concluded that the power which explained religious martyrdoms, as in the early days of Christianity and more recently in the history of Bahâism—which prompted the victims of persecution to sing and dance in the midst of tortures and as they went to death—was a fervent love for God and man, intense, eager, vibrant, unconquerable; that this accounts also for the rapid spread of true Bahâism and for the fervor of spiritual fire and devotion to be found all over India to-day. We saw that in developing this capacity to love, external aid and stimulus, as of a teacher or leader, seemed necessary, and the question was suggested: Why is not this external influence uniform?

Why do we see variations among the several peoples of the earth, from age to age, in the manifestation of religious force? Why is it most signally manifested, now, for instance, in Christianity, now in Mohammeddanism now in Bahâism? Why is it that the very ancient religion of India has not lost its former vigor, as is the case with some other old religions, but still abounds in spiritual fervour, as though in its prime?

These are the questions which we proposed for consideration in this paper.

Sociology has no doubt attempted to explain these phenomena; but as sociology ignores the most important element in the problem, the element of Divine influence, its conclusions have, I think, little present interest for us.

It is my purpose rather to offer you the explanation which one meets in India; in which, we may be sure, nothing relating to the Divine will be omitted. I remember to have called on a Superintendent of Police in South India, a vigorous man of about fifty years of age, and to have heard him remark, in the course of a short conversation, that he was very desirous to retire, and hoped to do so soon; and that he would then live sa that he could spend all his time in thinking of God. What indeed must be the spiritual *status* of a country where policemen are devoted to the Lord!

Let me remark, by way of preface, that while what I have to say to you merges upon the transcendental, it is not a speculation of my own or of any other isolated individuals; but that it is the actual belief to-day prevailing among the intelligent portion of the two hundred and fifty millions of the Hindu population of India, or at least so many of these as have preserved their respect for the traditions and institutions of their own land, and their confidence in them, against the materializing influence of Western ideas and education. As a national belief, therefore, it is certainly entitled to our respectful consideration.

It is also probable that what I am about to say will uncover to you a phase of Indian life which is new to you, and you will wonder why, if true, these facts have not come to you before. The currents of Indian life run very deep, and are well concealed from the casual investigator. The average tourist, or , indeed, the ordinary scientific investigator of social customs, would not be apt to obtain the

slightest inkling of the deep-seated beliefs to which I am about to refer. I shall tell you only what I have learned through a year's residence in the country, under circumstances very exceptionally favorable for obtaining reliable information on these subjects.

The extreme difficulty encountered by Westerners in learning about these matters is such that I am not aware that I can refer to any publication in support of my statements with the exception of Mr. Carpenter's *"From Adam's Peak to Elephanta,"* which deals intelligently and entertainingly with some phases of this interesting and, in the West, little understood subject. With regard to this work, a distinguished Hindu has said in the Westminister Review for September, 1902: "It is the only Western account of India which shows a knowledge of the great under-currents of Indian Life."*

I have found that there is widely recognized among the more intelligent of the natives of India a science of spiritual things, called *Jnânam,* Wisdom. This science is said to deal with the principles which underlie both the visible and invisible and spiritual worlds, and to be based upon actual and immediate perception of spiritual things and of God. It answers the questions which Western science has either confessed itself unable to answer or has answered unsatisfactorily to most persons, as, for instance, the purpose of human life, the reasons for the performance of duty, the nature and limitations of the mind, the existence or non-existence of a soul in man, of God, of a future life. And in answering these questions, this science necessarily indicates the true relations of man to the external world, and the attitude towards it, and the conduct of life in it, which are best for him to observe.

The masters of the Science of Wisdom are called *Jnânis* or Knowers of God. They are men who are reputed to have attained to that stage of development where they directly perceive God and spiritual things. It is said by them that the soul (*âtma*), the consciousness *(sakshi)* or the true *ego* of man, terms which they use convertibly, is a thing apart from both the physical body and the *manas* or mind, these latter being only its instruments. The ordinary man does not distinguish between the consciousness which knows and the mind which thinks, because the two are so involved with

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* P. Arunochalam, District Judge in Kwinnegale, Ceylon.

each other as to seem inseparable. Thought succeeds thought without cessation except in deep sleep, and the ordinary man not unnaturally concludes that the thinker is no other than the knower, otherwise called the soul or the Self.

The common view, therefore, is that thinking and sleep embrace the whole range of human experience. But the *Jnânis* affirm that if all thought is forced to run down to a perfect calm and sleep is kept off, a new world of experience opens out. When the soul is in association with the mind and is engaged in witnessing the operation of the mind, the materiality of the mind and its worldly nature are reflected on the soul and intensify its original obscurity, so that in wakeful moments it sees nothing but the world, and in sleep unmitigated darkness. If the energy of the soul is withdrawn, as it may be by proper training, from the planes of sense and thought, the soul attains knowledge unconditioned by time, place or other divided existence, and such knowledge is knowledge of God, knowledge of the Infinite, as distinguished from knowledge of the finite or the world.

A writer of whose work I shall have much to say further on, discusses this subject as follows: "We know as a fact that we see, hear, touch, taste and smell; we know also that we think. The expressions 'I know that I feel,' 'I know that I desire,' 'I know that I think,' mean only that one is conscious of those states of being, namely, the states of feeling, of desiring, of thinking. *Consciousness,* therefore, is the Being which knows and must not be confounded with the states or sensibilities induced in consciousness through the excitation of the senses and thoughts. When such sensibilities are discarded, what remains is consciousness pure; though such is the constitution of the human mind that men wanting in powers of clear introspection confound the consciousness with thought. So rapidly do the senses strike on the consciousness, and so constantly do thoughts present themselves from the very moment consciousness wakes from sleep to the moment it falls asleep again, that it is cheated with the blear illusion that it is identical with thought and the senses, even as thought is cheated with the blear illusion that it is identical with the body. The truth, however, *as experienced by saintly men,* is that consciousness or the true Self is wholly distinct from thought and the senses, just as the latter are

distinct from the tangible body. But men of the world, men who have not become sanctified in spirit, do not know this truth. In one of the oldest and most sacred songs of the East it is well stated that, "separate from all thought and the senses, yet reflecting the qualities of them all, it is the Lord and Ruler of all" (Svetasvatara Upanishad, ii, 117). Consciousness, or the true self, or the *soul*, or the *spirit*—for these are all synonymous terms—knows the senses and thoughts, but the senses and thoughts are not subtle enough to know the Soul, their "Lord and Ruler. When consciousness stands isolated or freed from the senses and thoughts, it will *know itself*. Nothing *else can know it, except God*. The soul thus freed is called the sanctified spirit." [1]

The attainment of this spiritual knowledge or *Jnânam* is not, it is said, open to everyone who chooses to apply himself to its acquisition, since instruction and training are not the only requisites for reaching it. A certain ripeness of nature, full development of neighborly love and other high virtues must be present as a foundation. Without these, instruction and training would be ineffective, nor would they be given by these competent to impart them.

The distinguishing characteristics of *Jnanis* are said to be kindness, compassion, love for all that lives, patience, forbearance, resignation and contentment under all circumstances whatsoever, nonresentment of injury, unwillingness to exact retribution from those who have harmed them. It is said that they are incapable of hatred or other evil passion, that they are unwilling to judge others, that they are utterly indifferent to worldly power of every kind, whether it be wealth, office, rank, or social position; that they have no concern about providing for their future, having perfect confidence in the infinite Power and Mercy of the Lord, but spend their lives in laboring for others as ministers of God. In brief, the character commonly assigned to them is the same as that associated in the West with Jesus of Nazareth.

It is said that the *Jnânis* live in all parts of India, and that there has never been a time when they were not to be found there. They are not, however, numerous; probably, I am told, not more than one

[1].—Commentary on St. Matthew, by Sri Parânanda, p. 96; Kegan Paul, London; H. W. Percival, 244 Lenox Avenue, New York City.

in ten millions of the population. They live for the most part retired lives; but some times they travel much from place to place, teaching and preaching. They are usually without property, and are cared for by their disciples, or by the people with whom they happen to come in contact. The people of India as a whole are most anxious to serve holy men, and no one who is thought to be devoted to the service of religion will be allowed to want. There are also some *Jnânis* who live in towns and cities engaged in the usual occupations of life, generally looked upon as ordinary men, their spiritual *status* being known only to those few persons, who have been drawn to them as disciples. These men are regarded be the most exemplary of citizens, the best and kindest of husbands, fathers, brothers; in short, they are esteemed to fulfill most perfectly all the duties of life. Yet while in the world they never forget that they are not of the world, and in all their actions are performed, not with the object of profiting by their fruits, but as service to the Lord. The following lines by one of them, who long occupied a high post in one of the states of Southern India, indicate the attitude which they observe towards worldly enjoyments.

While I live in shady groves, fragrant with fresh-blown flowers;
While I dring cool and limpid water, and disport myself therein;
While I find enjoyment in sandal-scented breezes, which move through the court like gentle maids;
While I revel in the day-like light of the glorious full moon;
While I feast on dishes of various flavors, seeming tempered with ambrosia;
While I am passing off into sleep, after much merriment, bedecked with garlands and perfumed with scent,
Grant me, O Shiva, who art true, spiritual and blessed, all-filling, indivisible and substrate of all, grant me the boon of never forgetting Thy grace, that I may avoid the perils of the pleasures of the world.—(Tayumanavar Saccidânanda Shivam, II).

The *Jnânis* stand for the highest and most sacred ideas of the Indian civilization, for all that is finest, noblest and purest in it. They are the offlorescence of the life of the nation; and of the life of the nation as a whole, not of any sect, creed or division of it. To them all external religious forms are alike. The Brahman, the

Buddhist, the Christian, the Mohammedan or the Agnostic are the same to them. Development of character and aptitude for receiving spiritual instruction are the only credentials which they regard. The most enlightened men of India have always gone and still go to the *Jnânis* when seeking spiritual light; for, it is said, they can always be found by earnest seekers for truth. Still, as of old, their prayer is:

"O Saint, teach us, for thou art the way, and there is no other for us.

"O Saint, thou art the way, thou art the way."

(Maitrayana Upanishad).

I am the way, said Christ Jesus (John XIV, 6). I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.—(ib X, 9).

The founder of the Babi faith called himself *Bab,* that is, door or gate.

The retirement in which *Jnânis* live may seem extraordinary to Western minds. Why, we are inclined to ask, do they not proclaim themselves and make their knowledge as widely as possible known and available to men? The answer is that religion must be adapted to the needs and capacities of the people; that religious or spiritual knowledge must be graduated like worldly knowledge; and that while the exoteric religions of India are well suited for the masses, the higher aspects of truth cannot be assimilated by them. Were the teachings of the *Jnânis* widely disseminated among the people, the effect would not be helpful, but rather confusing and disturbing to those minds which delight in ritual and other forms of concrete thought. Further, it is said that it is not necessary that they should publicly proclaim themselves in order that those who are fit to receive their instruction may learn of them, since he who is prepared for such knowledge always finds them. If one inquires how the *Jnâni* is discovered, one is told that the Lord of the Universe draws the seeker to the Teacher. Such is the infinite solicitude with which He watches over men, that whoever *needs* a spiritual teacher is certain to be led to one.

(To be Continued.)

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